

Testimony before the State Administration committee

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Scott Seilstad and I was elected to the Fergus County Community Council in the fall of 2006, I have served and currently serve as chairman. I want to thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony on House Bill 328. This simple bill will make needed changes to an election law that I feel has been overlooked.

As the law now stands, those who wish to file for an office that is nonpartisan and is a non paid position must collect signatures equal to 5% of the successful candidate for that office at the last election or a minimum of 5 signatures. Community councils and neighborhood councils are elected offices which this law would apply. What this would mean for Fergus County Community council if this law is not change is those who would wish to file for office in January of 2010 would have to obtain the signatures of 165 voters-- as the successful candidates received between 3000 and 4000 votes in November 2008.

In January of 2008 Fergus County Community Council members were required to get only 25 signatures as all successful candidates in Nov of 2006 were write-in candidates who received between 40 and 400 votes. Even this relatively small number soon proved to be a problem for some who wished to file for re-election.

An example of other elected officials who come under this law as non-paid , nonpartisan candidates, would be such things as Fire district boards, Transportation boards , Hospital boards and school boards. In all these cases other laws have been passed to exempt them from the current law. As an example laws concerning fire district boards and Transportation boards require only 5 signatures to file and all school districts under 6500 population also need only 5 signatures and those over 6500 need only 20 signatures.

I can think of no good reason for the state to continue to require up to 5% of the vote for an office that pays nothing and is nonpartisan. What interest would the state have in making it more difficult for those who want to serve their community in this manner. We should be encouraging those who wish to give freely of their time and energy to run for an office of this type.

I am not sure I would have run for the legislature if I had to run around and get 150 to 200 signatures instead of just forking over \$15 to file for office. How about some of you?

I want to thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony on House Bill 328. This Bill attempts to make needed changes to an election law for nonpartisan candidates who will also be non-paid. This law needs to be fixed and I am confident you are the ones to fix it.

Scott Seilstad

Chairman Fergus County Community Council